

BOARD OF REGENTS FOR ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATION



Enclosure 2b
July 7, 2011

Board of Regents Meeting
Held at RIDE
255 Westminster Street, Providence

Thursday, June 16, 2011
11:30 a.m. – 1:30 p.m.

MINUTES

Attending: G. Caruolo (chairman), C. Bernal, C. Callahan, R. Carothers, K. Forbes,
M. Santos, B. Shimberg

Absent: L. Adrain, P. Guida

The meeting convened at 11:35 a.m.

Chairman Caruolo welcomed everyone to the meeting and announced that Vice-Chairman Guida and Regent Adrain were on travel and would not be joining the meeting, but that Regent Adrain would be listening in via conference call.

Approval of Agenda

On a motion duly made by Regent Callahan and seconded by K. Forbes it was

VOTED: That the Board of Regents for Elementary and Secondary Education approve accept the day's agenda.

Vote: 7 members voted in the affirmative and 0 members voted in the negative as follow:

YEAS: G. Caruolo, C. Bernal, C. Callahan, R. Carothers,
K. Forbes, M. Santos, B. Shimberg

NAYS: 0

Commissioner's Report

Race to the Top (RTTT)

- RIDE held a meeting the day before with all district superintendents, school-committee chairs, and teachers-union leaders on moving forward together with RTTT implementation.
- The meeting was scheduled in collaboration with the RI School Superintendents Association, RI Association for School Committees, NEA-RI, and RI Federation of Teachers and Health Professionals. Each of the organizations issued a survey to their members to find out what RTTT projects they most wanted to hear more about and what specific questions they had.
- Based on those survey results, RIDE presented information about implementing educator evaluation, standards and curriculum, and other RTTT projects, as well as potential implications for collective-bargaining agreements.
- The meeting was well-attended and productive. RIDE is considering holding more of these meetings quarterly or bi-annually.

Budget

- The legislature is in the final stages of its deliberations on the FY 12 budget, and RIDE is hopeful that year one of the funding formula will be included in the budget. RIDE will provide the BOR with an update on the FY 12 budget once information is released from the House Finance Committee.
- Following months of discussions attempting to balance the work and authority of the anticipated labor-management EMO, the Providence superintendent requested a shift to the "Transformation" model. As a result of this change and the timing surrounding it, the Office of Transformation worked closely with Providence to determine how best to maximize the impact of a federal grant award late in the school year.
- The persistently lowest-achieving schools are eligible for school-improvement grant (SIG) funds. The SIG funds that were recently awarded will go toward summer work in these schools and continued planning for turning the schools around. There is now, however, the potential for the schools to be given additional time to implement the expected components of school transformation.
- RIDE has been working closely with the US Department of Education to ensure a smooth transition into the next phase of work with the schools and simultaneous compliance with federal guidance under the grant program.

Public Remarks

In light of the recent public hearings and the previous BOR meeting at which 2 hours were dedicated to public comment on the proposed Achievement First Mayoral Academy, Chairman Caruolo asked that folks who had previously testified be mindful and allow time for others who had not had a chance to testify to do so.

Many of the same Cranston School Dept. staff that testified on June 2nd came to restate their concerns/opinions on the proposed Achievement First Mayoral Academies.

Some of their concerns included:

- Race to the Top money is not going to communities.
- Achievement First is corporate-run, for-profit, with high executive salaries.
- Achievement First wants to come to Providence during the demise of the labor-management compact.
- Traditional public schools should also be allowed to have longer school days.
- Cranston does not need a charter public school.
- Where would we house these additional schools?
- Achievement First is underperforming the Cranston schools.
- Approval of Achievement First is not a democratic decision.
- Charters select students and do not serve all students.
- Charters do not select students with disabilities.
- Selection of the best students affects the quality of the students remaining in the district.
- The district has to bear the high cost of special education for the remaining students.
- Achievement First would drain money from the districts, which would have a fiscal impact on Cranston and Providence.
- Cranston is a world-class school department, and taxpayers see no reason why they should be supporting a charter school.

Representatives from RI Kids Count, RI-Can, and the Blackstone Valley Prep School all provided comments in support of the proposed Achievement First Mayoral Academy.

- RI Kids Count supports excellent public schools, excellent district schools, as well as excellent charter public schools.
- RI needs to close the achievement gap between high-income and low-income students if it wants to survive in this economy, and we should take advantage of every opportunity.
- Approval of the proposed charter is in the best interest of the majority of families and students in RI.
- Rejecting this application would send the message that RI wants to continue to do business as usual, that it is no longer a state committed to transforming education.
- Charter schools are not intended to be islands operating within district school systems, but rather partners working to help spur innovation, share best practices, and set higher expectations for all children, whether they attend a district school or a public charter school.

- Poor students of color need choices so that they can compete with white, middle-class students.
- RI needs schools where young people of color are given the opportunity to succeed.

Mayor Fung and representatives from the RI Mayoral Academies addressed the BOR and answered questions.

- What will happen to mayoral charter schools if a newly elected Mayor comes in and does not support them?
- Evidence around demand and support.
- Look at the compilation of all the information that RIDE has received both electronically and from public hearings.
- Data/statistics that are being reported are conflicting.
- The Board of Regents should be looking at the quality of the application instead of putting so much emphasis how the community is feeling.
- Letters of support were form letters while all opposition letters were personal letters from either parents or community members.
- BOR has not seen much input from Providence residents other than hearing from Providence Teachers Union President, Mr. Smith.
- Mayors who are supportive of mayoral academies need to be mindful of the district public schools that also need to be supported.
- We have to be careful about the very powerful political forces that are all over the country trying to undermine traditional public education. What is their agenda?

Commissioner Gist addressed the Regents and asked them to look at the quality of the proposal presented to them.

- Public charters represent less than 5 percent (of the student population). The goal is to improve achievement at public schools. Public charters are an important part of that – they are not a solution in and of themselves.
- Focus on why we have public charter schools in our state. They are not to take the place of traditional public schools. They are to help all of us.
- Why is it that you can spend \$13,000, and your students go to school 190 days? Why?
- How can traditional school systems begin to become more nimble – in ways better for teachers, families, students, and everyone in the community?
- We also want to have charters because we want to lift up performance in every school.
- We have tremendous lack of belief that children in poverty can actually achieve at high levels.
- We have to say: As a matter of fact, it can happen; we can close achievement gaps.

Jennifer Smith voiced that the role of a charter is to disseminate and share best practices.

Chairman Caruolo voiced that there are glaringly contradictory arguments:

- Why does RI need a school to change how public schools are run?
- Moving the goalposts – the “elephant” not addressed in statute. Since charters came to Rhode Island and showed success – (was that?) always the goal. How solid in the first place? But something’s changed.

He stated that his greatest fear was that the fight for reform would be taking a back seat to the fight for resources. The proposed application is a charter-school *system* application. RI has to pay for public schools, and that’s getting harder every day.

APPROVAL ITEMS:

State Property Transactions

Acquisition of HUD & Newport Housing Authority Property for the Construction of the new Crowley MET School in Newport:

On a motion duly made by Regent Shimberg and seconded by Regent Forbes it was

VOTED: That the Board of Regents for Elementary and Secondary approve the acquisition of HUD & Newport Housing Property for the Construction of the new Crowley MET School in Newport.

Vote: 7 members voted in the affirmative and 0 members voted in the negative as follows:

YEAS: G. Caruolo, C. Bernal, C. Callahan, R. Carothers, K. Forbes, M. Santos, B. Shimberg

NAYS: 0

Transfer of state-owned Newport Career and Tech Center from the City of Newport

On a motion duly made by Regent Callahan and seconded by Regent Bernal it was

VOTED: That the Board of Regents for Elementary and Secondary approve the transfer of the state-owned Newport Career and Tech Center from the City of Newport.

Vote: 7 members voted in the affirmative and 0 members voted in the negative as follows:

YEAS: G. Caruolo, C. Bernal, C. Callahan, R. Carothers, K. Forbes, M. Santos, B. Shimberg

NAYS: 0

Transfer of state-owned East Providence Career and Tech Center from the State to the City of East Providence

On a motion duly made by Regent Callahan and seconded by Regent Bernal it was

VOTED: That the Board of Regents for Elementary and Secondary approve the transfer of the state-owned East Providence Career and Tech Center from the State to the City of East Providence.

Vote: 7 members voted in the affirmative and 0 members voted in the negative as follows:

YEAS: G. Caruolo, C. Bernal, C. Callahan, R. Carothers, K. Forbes, M. Santos, B. Shimberg

NAYS: 0

Blackstone Academy Charter School – Request for Expansion

Commissioner Gist recommended that the BOR not approve Blackstone Academy Charter School's request for expansion by 11 students. RIDE conducted a thorough analysis of the data from the school to inform its decision regarding a request for additional students. The school has had historically low math performance, though its most recent NECAP results suggest that the school is on the right path to change and RIDE is encouraged by the recent success. If the performance continues, RIDE can confidently bring a recommendation to the BOR to increase the enrollment, but, until then, RIDE would be remiss in making such a recommendation.

Blackstone Academy Charter School Co-Directors Carolyn Sheehan and Kyleen Carpenter addressed the Regents and asked that they reconsider Commissioner Gist's recommendation denying the school's request to add eleven students to next year's roster.

On a motion duly made by Regent Shimberg and seconded by Regent Callahan it was

VOTED: That the Board of Regents for Elementary and Secondary approve Blackstone Academy's request to expand by 11 students.

Vote: 6 members voted in the affirmative and 1 member voted in the negative as follows:

YEAS: C. Bernal, C. Callahan, R. Carothers, K. Forbes, M. Santos, B. Shimberg

NAYS: G. Caruolo

Vote to support Vice-Chairman Guida's nomination for President-Elect of the National Association of State Boards of Education (NASBE).

On a motion duly made by Regent Callahan and seconded by Regent Carothers it was

VOTED: That the Board of Regents for Elementary and Secondary Education support Vice-Chairman Guida's nomination for President-Elect of the National Association of State Boards of Education (NASBE).

Vote: 7 members voted in the affirmative and 0 member voted in the negative as follows:

YEAS: G. Caruolo, C. Bernal, C. Callahan, R. Carothers, K. Forbes, M. Santos, B. Shimberg

NAYS: 0

Adjournment: The meeting adjourned at 2:45 p.m.